

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1943

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ALSO FOR STATE/EB/OT/TA AND USDOC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BGEN, AS
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE RESTRICTIONS ON AUSTRALIAN TIMBER IMPORTS

REF: CANBERRA 08047

TO: MR. EDWARD TUTTELL
PATRICK LUMBER COMPANY
P.O. BOX 4726
PORTLAND, OREGON
TELEX: 020 230 360336

REFERENCE: YOUR TELEX OF DEC 1, 1977

1. WE SHARE FULLY YOUR DESIRE TO PRESERVE THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN SAWN LUMBER INDUSTRY AS A MAJOR EXPORTER TO AUSTRALIA AND IN THIS REGARD HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH AUSTRALIAN TIMBER IMPORTERS FEDERATION, AMONG OTHERS. AS YOU NO DOUBT KNOW, TIMBER IMPORTERS FEDERATION SENT TO DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE (DIC) WITH RESPECT TO ALL TIMBER IMPORTS A VERY WELL REASONED SUBMISSION OF THE SORT WE RECOMMEND THAT PACIFIC LUMBER EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION PREPARE ON BEHALF OF AMERICAN-ORIGIN IMPORTS FOR POSSIBLE TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY HEARINGS.

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2. FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH FEDERATION, COMMERCIAL ATTACHE HAS TRANSMITTED TO OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF DIC REVIEW A LETTER SETTING FORTH OUR CONCERNS AND PRESENTING A CASE FROM AMERICAN STANDPOINT AGAINST RESTRICTIONS. COPY OF THIS LETTER BEING FORWARDED TO YOU AND TO FEDERATION.

3. IN REGARD TO EMBASSY ACTIONS, DISTINCTION SHOULD BE

MADE BETWEEN DIPLOMATIC SUBMISSION OR REPRESENTATIONS, AS IN LETTER REFERRED TO ABOVE, AND DIPLOMATIC PROTEST. EXCEPT WHEN AN ITEM IS GATT-BOUND, THERE IS NOTHING IN GATT RULES WHICH OBLIGATES AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO REFRAIN FROM INCREASING DUTY WHERE IT BELIEVES IMPORTS TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DISTRESS TO A LOCAL INDUSTRY. INDEED, UNDER OUR OWN LEGISLATION, U.S. TRADE ACT OF 1974, PRESIDENT IS REQUIRED, WITH CERTAIN EXCEPTIONS, TO PROVIDE SOME FORM OF IMPORT RELIEF, INCLUDING DUTY INCREASES AND TARIFF-RATE QUOTAS, WHERE INCREASED IMPORTS ARE A SUBSTANTIAL CAUSE OF SERIOUS INJURY OR THE THREAT THEREOF. AUSTRALIA HAS NOT IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS ON TIMBER IMPORTS BUT IS MERELY EXAMINING QUESTION OF WHETHER SUCH RESTRICTIONS WOULD BE JUSTIFIED AND DESIRABLE, AND IT IS ENTIRELY WITHIN ITS RIGHTS TO DO SO. ACCORDINGLY, WHILE WE INTEND TO ENSURE THAT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS AWARE OF U.S. INTERESTS AND HAS BEFORE IT ALL PERTINENT ARGUMENTS AGAINST INCREASED PROTECTION, A DIPLOMATIC PROTEST WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE AND PROBABLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.

4. AS INDICATED IN EMBASSY'S PREVIOUS MESSAGE, IN PRESENTING THE CASE AGAINST INCREASED PROTECTION, IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT U.S. EXPORTERS BE HEARD DIRECTLY. HOPEFULLY, AUSTRALIAN TIMBER IMPORTERS FEDERATION IS JUSTIFIED IN ITS OPTIMISM THAT CASE AGAINST INCREASED PROTECTION IS SO STRONG THAT DIC CAN BE DISSUADED BY

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EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION FROM MAKING A REFERRAL TO TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY. IF REFERRAL SHOULD BE MADE, HOWEVER, IT WILL BE INCUMBENT UPON PACIFIC LUMBER EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION AND OTHER U.S. EXPORTERS TO CARRY THE BALL IN THAT FORUM FOR U.S. EXPORT INTERESTS. AS YOU DO SO, WE SHALL BE ASSISTING YOU IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE, AND WE WILL, OF COURSE, BE FOLLOWING UP WITH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AFTER ANY TAA REPORT IS SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE.

5. COPY OF THIS MESSAGE IS BEING PROVIDED TO AUSTRALIAN TIMBER IMPORTERS FEDERATION. ALSTON

NOTE BY OC/T: PASSED TO ABOVE ADDRESSEE.

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